REMARKS:

This application has been carefully studied and amended in view of the Office Action dated September 13, 2007. Reconsideration of that action is requested in view of the following.

Claims 17-20 have been canceled without prejudice to advance the prosecution of this case. Claim 21 which had referred to claim 17 for a recitation of the apparatus used in the process has been amended to now recite that same apparatus instead of referring to now canceled claim 17. Claim 21 has also been amended to recite the thickness in U.S. style dimensions and to correct a typographical error in step (c). The amendments to claim 21 do not involve any new issues, but rather simply place the claim in independent form and correct obvious errors.

It is respectfully submitted that parent claim 21 and its dependent claims are patentable over the prior art and in particular over Okamura and Sawano, and further in view of Leenders et al.

The Examiner asserts that Okamura in view of Sawano teaches a process for the production of printing plates for newspaper printing, wherein an apparatus as had been claimed in claim 17 is used, comprising steps (a), (b), (d), (e) and (g), but fails to teach step (c), i.e. exposure of the flexographic printing element to actinic light by means of the exposure unit (C)

through the mask produced, and that drying is conducted at from 105 to 160°C. The Examiner continues: Leenders et al. teach a method for producing a flexographic printing element wherein a mask is produced by ink-jet means, said element is exposed through said mask, and then the unexposed regions are removed. The method of Leenders et al. is used because it is convenient and results in a material that has a high receptivity. Therefore, it would have been obvious to further modify the invention of Okamura according to Leenders et al. in order to create a highly receptive printing plate.

As pointed out in the prior amendment, Okamura teaches a process for producing offset printing plates . The process taught by Okamura comprises the steps of positively charging an organic photoconductor layer (OPC layer) by corona discharge treatment, applying laser light to the positively charged OPC layer, thereby for ming electrostatic images, allowing positively charged toner particles to adhere to the electrostatic latent image, fixation of the toner particles by heating by a halogen lamp, and developing using an alkaline liquid, whereby the OPC layer other than the fixed toner image is removed, followed by a rinsing treatment of the plate surface and an application of rubber liquid to the plate surface. By contrast, Leenders et al. relate to a flexographic printing plate precursor comprising a photopolymer layer, a barrier layer, and an ink-receiving layer

wherein the main component is gelatine (claim 1). The ink-receiving layer is characterised by a high receptivity of water-based ink. The flexographic printing plate is made by (i) making a photo mask consisting of image and non-image areas by image-wise jetting water-based ink to the ink-receiving layer, (ii) exposing the photopolymer layer to UV light through the photo mask, and (iii) processing the photopolymer layer using a developing solution, thereby removing the photopolymer layer at non-image areas (claim 6).

Given the fact that Okamura relates to the production of *offset printing plates*, and Leenders et al. relates to the completely different technology of making a photopolymerisable flexographic printing plate, which is photopolymerised through a photo mask made by ink-jetting, there appears to be no logic in the Examiner's assertion that "it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to further modify the invention of Okamura according to Leenders et al. in order to create a highly receptive printing plate in a convenient manner". With the offset printing plates of Okamura, the image is created by applying laser light to an OPC layer positively charged by corona discharge treatment, and allowing positively charged toner particles to adhere to the electrostatic latent image. According to Leenders et al., the image is created by ink-jetting the ink-receptive layer, thereby creating a photo mask and applying UV

light through the photo mask to photopolymerise the underlying photopolymerisable layer. It makes absolutely no sense to apply such an ink receptive layer, to ink-jet this ink-receptive layer and to apply actinic light through the thus produced mask in the invention of Okamura. In doing so, one would have to replace the method of Okamura completely by the method of Leenders et al. We therefore believe that the rejection of the Examiner of the process claims is not legally correct.

The further secondary references of Knoll and Arimatsu, which were further combined with regard to various dependent claims, do not overcome the deficiencies of the three references used in the rejection of parent claim 21.

In view of the above remarks and amendments it is respectfully submitted that this application should be passed to issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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